

Community Design

Physical Layout

Belmont-Fallon is in the southeast quadrant of the city. It is the northern part of the area commonly known as “Southeast.” It has a traditional neighborhood design with narrow, tree-lined streets that are arranged in a classic grid system with occasional angles, offsets, and curves. Sidewalks are usually on both sides of the street and have a grass planting strip between the sidewalk and curb. Houses are typically close to the front property line (15’-25’) and are close to each other (10’-15’). Alleys provide access to parking and rear yards/garages and also provide a place for utilities and trash collection. Houses tend to be of similar scale, massing, and architecture, and most have porches. Though houses may differ slightly in materials and features, related house styles create a pleasing rhythm along streets.

The layout of the neighborhood — where residential areas, commercial areas, and parks are mixed together — makes it possible for residents to shop, work, and take advantage of recreational amenities without having to leave the neighborhood. More progressive developers throughout the nation are using this traditional design for new neighborhoods because it creates a sense of place, fosters interaction with neighbors, and is pedestrian-oriented.





Some major streets in the neighborhood such as Dale Avenue and a small portion of 9th Street near Tazewell Avenue are attractive landscaped boulevards planted with trees. Bullitt Avenue and Jamison Avenue work together as single arterial road and have no landscaping. The rolling topography of the neighborhood makes for excellent views of the downtown skyline as well as neighborhood roofscapes often featured in photos of Roanoke. The grid street system is superimposed on this rolling topography, which creates variety and results in a unique character on each street. The Mill Mountain Star is visible from most of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood has focal points and community gathering places in its schools and parks. Fallon Park and Jackson Park are picturesque with many mature trees and have a full complement of recreational facilities. Both provide large amounts of open space. The Old Fire House #7 on Jamison Avenue is another neighborhood focal point. Since its closing, community groups have used the fire house for meetings and community activities. Continuing in its role as a civic amenity, the building is now used as a satellite police station.

While people moved from traditional neighborhoods to outlying suburbs during the last half of the 20th Century, many people are now seeking out older neighborhoods for their sense of community, physical attractiveness, and convenience. As more people begin to reject long commutes, over-reliance on automobiles, and the lack of community that go along with conventional suburban development, neighborhoods like Belmont-Fallon are ripe for revitalization. Respecting and promoting this design is a key to the revitalization of neighborhoods throughout Roanoke.

Land Use Patterns

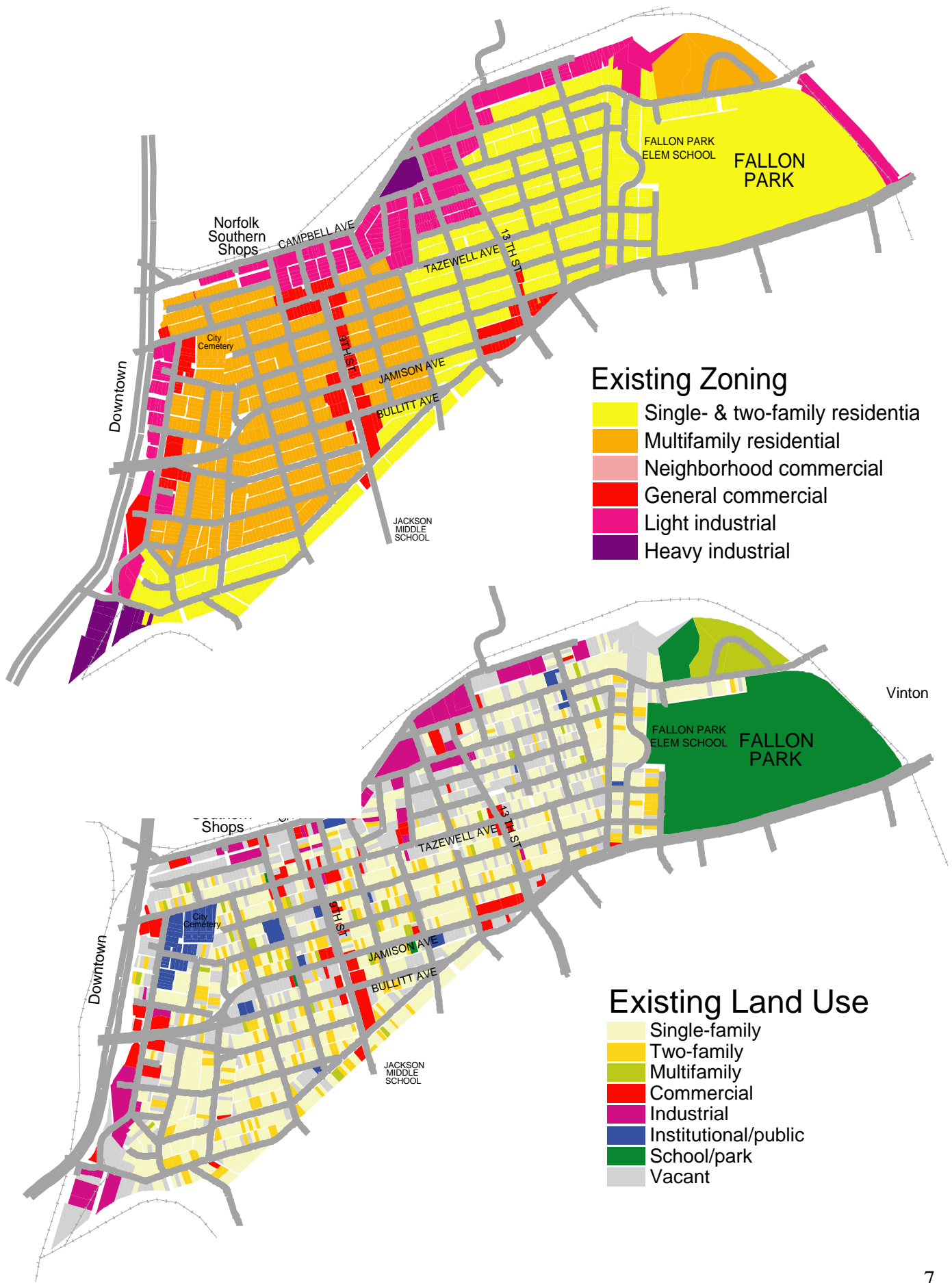
As a traditional neighborhood, Belmont-Fallon's residential, commercial, and industrial development function as a unit. The predominant land use in Belmont-Fallon is single-family residential which occupies nearly half of the properties. About 12% of properties are dedicated to duplex or multifamily uses. Multifamily housing is dispersed throughout the neighborhood and is generally contained in large foursquare structures rather than in apartment buildings. A substantial amount of land is devoted to parks.

Belmont-Fallon has a 60-acre industrial district concentrated along Campbell Avenue near the Norfolk Southern shops. Only about 2% of the neighborhood's land area is dedicated to industrial uses.

Most commercial uses are concentrated in four existing centers. These centers provide basic retail and services within close walking distance of the residents. Various commercial establishments are dispersed throughout the neighborhood. Commercial uses account for about 4% of the neighborhood's properties.

Nearly 30% of the neighborhood's parcels are vacant (about 108 acres). Along with the need for improved maintenance of existing housing, future use of vacant parcels will be a key to revitalization. Vacant land is generally in small parcels scattered around the neighborhood, which limits opportunities for major redevelopment projects.

Demolition of buildings for parking lots is a serious problem in Belmont. Over three acres of the vacant land in Belmont is dedicated to periodically-used parking. In Roanoke's downtown neighborhoods, there is a trend of businesses and institutions purchasing adjacent properties and demolishing the structure to provide more convenient parking. In some areas, a cycle of purchase and demolition has continued until entire blocks have become filled with asphalt rather than buildings. Removal of buildings for parking seriously compromises the urban fabric of the neighborhood and works against revitalization efforts. At a minimum, parking lots should be screened and buffered with vegetation to reduce their impact on the neighborhood.



Gateways

The appearance of gateways to downtown were cited as important to the image of the neighborhood. Currently, the gateways are unattractive highway overpasses that appear unsafe and uninviting. A once seamless connection between Belmont and downtown was severed by construction of Interstate 581 in the mid-1960s. Church Avenue, Dale Avenue, and Bullitt Avenue were dead-ended as part of the highway project.

There are four gateways that need improvement. *Campbell Avenue* leads to an industrial area and is a heavily used connection to Vinton. The gateway has an unkempt appearance and the areas under the bridge are covered with weeds, trash, and broken glass. The predominant land use west of the bridge is surface parking. The Norfolk Southern shops have interesting industrial structures and Lick Run parallels Campbell Avenue. *Tazewell Avenue* passes under I-581. Surface parking surrounds the area to the west of the overpass. There are signs of vagrancy underneath the bridge as well as litter and graffiti. *Elm Avenue* is a very congested gateway to downtown. The area is automobile-dominated and dangerous for pedestrians; small sidewalks have no separation from heavy traffic and it is difficult to cross the street. Vagrants congregate underneath the bridge and panhandle at the exit ramp and along Elm Avenue. Finally, *Albemarle Avenue* will be the neighborhood's connection with the Carilion Biotech Institute and also connects to Old Southwest. The gateway has a looming, elevated highway overpass and railroad tracks. There are industrial uses on both sides of the overpass. The Mill Mountain Greenway, which will run between the City Market and Mill Mountain will pass through this intersection.

